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INFO RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 6407
RUEHHK/AMCONSUL HONG KONG 7649

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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: U.S.-TAIWAN RELATIONS, SIXTIETH ANNIVERSARY
OF THE 2-28 INCIDENT

11. Summary: Taiwan's major Chinese-language dailies continued to focus news coverage February 27 on the upcoming sixtieth anniversary of the 2-28 Incident, and on the 2008 presidential elections. In terms of editorials and commentaries, an op-ed piece in the pro-independence "Liberty Times" discussed Taiwan's name change campaign and said the United States "owes" Taiwan since the signing of the U.S.-China Shanghai Communiqué 35 years ago, in which Taiwan was considered part of China. Several papers editorialized on the 2-28 Incident: The "Liberty Times" editorial urged Taiwan's nativist regime to uncover the truth of the 2-28 Incident, thoroughly carry out transitional justice and transform Taiwan into a normal country. An editorial in the pro-unification "United Daily News," however, urged Taiwan to learn from the 2-28 Incident and strive to prevent its rulers from manipulating ethnic antagonism. An op-ed in the limited-circulation, pro-independence, English-language "Taipei Times," on the other hand, said the United States must "accept moral responsibility" because it "stood by and did nothing" in the wake of the 2-28 Incident. End summary.

12. U.S.-Taiwan Relations

"United States has Owed Taiwan for 35 Years"

Luo Chih-cheng, associate professor and chair of the Department of Political Science at Soochow University, opined in the pro-independence "Liberty Times" [circulation: 500,000] (2/27):

"This year's February 28 will mark the 35th anniversaries of the signing of the U.S.-China Shanghai Communiqué, which signifies the origin of the United States' 'one China policy,' because Washington said in the communiqué that 'The United States acknowledges that all Chinese on either side of the Taiwan Strait maintain that there is but one China, and that Taiwan is a part of China. The United States Government does not challenge that position.' But the problem is that major changes have taken place in the Taiwan Strait now since 35 years ago. In Taiwan, those who identify themselves as Taiwanese have long exceeded 60 percent and, besides, a majority of the Taiwan people believes that Taiwan is not part of the People's Republic of China. Therefore, it is obviously an obsolete move and a challenge to the status quo if one insists on imposing the 'one China' framework outlined in the Shanghai Communiqué on Taiwan.

"On the other hand, however, the real purpose of the name change campaign launched proactively in Taiwan recently is not to sabotage the status quo but to reflect faithfully and ensure the peaceful status of Taiwan's democracy. This is because the power pushing for the name change campaign comes from the political reality and status quo of rising Taiwan identity. ... Therefore, if the United States can view and support with calmness Taiwan's name change campaign which reflects objective reality, [it will learn that] those who oppose the name change campaign are those who like to make a fuss about trifles and who have lost contact with reality. ..."

13. Sixtieth Anniversary of the 2-28 Incident

A) "To Carry out Transitional Justice Should Be the Top Priority for a Nativist Regime"

The pro-independence "Liberty Times" [circulation: 500,000] editorialized (2/27):

"Tomorrow will mark the sixtieth anniversary of the 2-28 Incident, and private communities as well as the ruling and opposition parties all conduct activities and seminars to show their respect and commemoration of this historic tragedy. The uncovering of the truth of the 2-28 Incident and its historical position and interpretation are the core subject that determines whether Taiwan is able to break away from the historical shadow of rule by martial law, thoroughly to carry out transitional justice, and to cultivate a democratic culture of tolerance and respect. ...

"The nativist regime has ruled for nearly seven years, but the progress it has made with regard to carrying out transitional justice has seemed limited. One can naturally attribute this to the ill-intentioned hindrance created by the Blue camp and pro-unification faction. But the nativist regime must also honestly reflect on itself and not blame others when it comes to whether it has really regarded the implementation of transitional justice as its most important historical mission and has striven for transforming [Taiwan] into a normal country despite all difficulties. ..."

B) "No More Manipulation of Ethnic Confrontation: the Lesson for the Sixtieth Anniversary of the 2-28 Incident"

The pro-unification "United Daily News" [circulation: 400,000] editorialized (2/27):
OF THE 2-28 INCIDENT

"... Prior to this year's February 28 Memorial Day, several opinion polls of different sources indicated that as much as 50 to 60 percent of the Taiwan people believe that ethnic antagonism is getting worse in Taiwan, and most analysts believe this is a result of election campaigning. Today, whereas the political impact caused by, and the pain suffered by, the families of the victims of the 2-28 Incident have lasted for 60 years, Taiwan society, under the influence of different political forces, still fails to break away from the shadow of ethnic cleavages. This is in reality Taiwan's biggest misfortune. ... As a result, if we hope to learn a lesson from this historic tragedy on the sixtieth anniversary of the 2-28 Incident, we need to acknowledge the cruel fact that war suppresses human nature, and we should keep in mind the spirits of those people who fought against the national machine. All the more, against the current backdrop of Taiwan's society, we need to strive to prevent political rulers from manipulating ethnic confrontation. ..."

C) "228 Crucial to Taiwan's Political Landscape"

Shen Chieh, a U.S.-based journalist, opined in the pro-independence, English-language "Taipei Times" [circulation: 30,000] (2/27):

"... The 228 Incident marked the beginning of Taiwan's independence movement, and it represents a crucial watershed in Taiwanese politics. The Chinese Nationalist Party (KMT) was responsible for mass slaughter, and the US, which stood by and did nothing, must accept moral responsibility. ... Sixty years later, the regime responsible for slaughtering Taiwanese has been eliminated by voters, and Taiwanese still hope that the US will recognize and protect this nascent democracy. The US missed an earlier opportunity by ignoring justice. It should do good now by giving Taiwanese belated justice."

YOUNG